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## Book Reviews

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### A SUMERIAN "URGESCHICHTE"

The fascinating title of Vol. X, No. 1, of the publications of the Babylonian Section of the University Museum at Philadelphia<sup>1</sup> stirs the imagination and forcibly reminds the reader of the race solidarity that should be. Laying aside all predilections, however, the study of this text by a considerable group of eminent Sumerian scholars leaves no reasonable doubt about it: the title is unfortunate, not to say misleading.

This outcome places beyond the scope of this survey the 65 pages of introduction, rich as it is in illustrative material relating to the title; and it confines our attention to the 20 pages of transliterated and translated text, and 2 autographed plates.

Owing to the damaged condition of the tablet, the lacunae are so extensive that the actual theme of the text may long remain a matter of doubt. The unity of the original is scarcely clear from the printed title, and it is much more obscure in the exegesis of the editor. The present writer has suggested a viewpoint from which possibly unity might be secured.<sup>2</sup> Professor Jastrow's "Sumerian Myths of Beginnings"<sup>3</sup> covers the most of its contents.

The correct and complete analysis of the subject-matter is not, however, the primary consideration in a textual volume like the present. The accuracy of the text is the fundamental concern, and there seems to be some need of emphasizing this apparent truism in the present instance. If there is one criticism of the notable work of elucidating this text, it is that theories have sometimes taken precedence over textual facts.

The printed text is confessedly inaccurate. The editor has made numerous modifications in various journals.<sup>4</sup> More corrections have been made by others,<sup>5</sup> but the list is nowhere complete or harmonious. The difficulty is more deep-seated. Langdon's own corrections have been made with the confident assertion that they were not considerable enough to shake his first theory of the poem. Divergent readings by others have been made,

<sup>1</sup> *The Sumerian Epic of Paradise, The Flood and The Fall of Man*. By Stephen Langdon. Philadelphia: University Museum, 1915. Pp. 97+5 autographed plates.

<sup>2</sup> See *JAOS*, XXXIX, 322-28.

<sup>3</sup> *AJSL*, XXXIII, 91-144.

<sup>4</sup> See *JAOS*, XXXVI (1916), 140-45; *AJSL*, XXXIII (1917), 245-49; *ET* (1918), pp. 218 f.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Jastrow, *AJSL*, XXXIII, 94-95; cf. Chiera's list, above, pp. 232 ff.

more especially where the text appeared to be manifestly against the theory of the title. In the same connection it is not infrequently the case, where the sign value is correctly given by Langdon, that the sign itself is inaccurately reproduced. The sign *gi* is a case in point. It occurs at least seven times on the tablet, in the majority of instances clearly written with two perpendicular wedges, and perhaps it was so intended in all. Langdon with one exception represents it with only one upright wedge, which brings it into partial resemblance to *máš*. There are many similar phenomena.

Taken as a whole these variations of copying and reading are remarkable and require explanation in so practiced a copyist as the editor. They are readily accounted for when we learn that most of the text was copied from a photographic reproduction. Even a cursory glance at the original makes it evident that nothing short of omniscience could have accomplished what the editor essayed to do.

The first need, therefore, is that the entire text be restudied as a whole and correctly reproduced. No sure progress in the interpretation can be hoped for till that is accomplished—one theory being about as uncertain as another. It is disappointing, therefore, when the editor apparently seeks to shake off the controversy by urging more important tasks. This may be true, but it is safe to say that whoever furnishes a reasonably reliable text of this tablet will perform quite as important a service as the production of the present copy. It may not be amiss to add that the tablet shows many marks of disintegration, which make it imperative that the task be done without too much delay.

It is accordingly not yet feasible to review the text as a whole, and the limitations of space will permit only a limited discussion of details.

Professors Prince<sup>1</sup> and Jastrow<sup>2</sup> have probably done the most important pioneering work on the poem; and the latter has without doubt made the most brilliant single contribution to the true apprehension of its meaning. In the basic passage, obv. II 24 ff., however, Professor Luckenbill has rightly pointed out<sup>3</sup> two of Jastrow's readings that are improbable.

In obv. II 24 *e-a* in Langdon is read *dirig* by Jastrow. Langdon's reproduction of the text at this point is exact even to the representation of the erasure traces underlying the *a* of *e-a*. In addition the scribe shows no marked peculiarities when he employs *dirig* elsewhere; cf. obv. III 9. In obv. II 25 Langdon's *gi* is interpreted as *máš* by Jastrow. The writing of *gi* is uniform with the exception noted above, which only confirms the reading in this instance. *máš* itself is made quite differently; cf. obv. I 17.

The first sign in obv. II 25 is, however, incorrectly reproduced by Langdon, but neither in the transcribed text nor the original is Sumerian *á* possible. There is a defect in the tablet near the base and at the left of the upright

<sup>1</sup> See *JAOs*, XXXVI, 90-114, 269-73.

<sup>2</sup> *JAOs*, XXXVI, 122-35, 274-99; *AJSL*, XXXIII, 91-144.

<sup>3</sup> See *AJTh*, XXIII, 103, n. 3.

wedge. There are two, not three, horizontal strokes. There is only one certain diagonal wedge, and when compared with *uš* above and below there seems to be no reasonable doubt that the same character is intended here also.

These changes do not necessarily alter the significance of Jastrow's interpretation; indeed, they may rather enhance it. The objection might be brought against Jastrow's translation, as it stands, that the coitus (cf. obv. II 25) occurs too soon; cf. line 30. Langdon's rendering of *e-a* (obv. II 24) might still stand, but this use of *e* ought not to be pressed till the more usual equivalents have been found to be irrelevant. *e-a* signifies "cohabitation" (*Sumer. Glos.*, pp. 1, 31). *gi* (l. 25), i.e., *ge*, interchanging with *gé*, signifies "turn, bring back, restore," here applied to erection. *kàš* in the same line regularly means "be fiery" (*Sumer. Glos.*, p. 116). Lines 24-26 would accordingly read: "His member of [i.e., for] cohabitation he uncovered. His member he erected. It became violently inflamed. His member, large and firm, he would not draw aside."

In rev. II 44 the third sign has been a matter of some doubt and controversy (cf. *AJSL*, XXXIII, 139, n. 3). The sign consists of two clearly written perpendicular wedges. There is not the slightest trace discernible that would favor the reading *a*. This is a matter of some importance in the rendering of this difficult passage. Most of the renderings proposed would seem to be considerably affected by it, including that of Albright (cf. *JAOS*, XXXIX, 93).<sup>1</sup> Professor T. J. Meek, of Meadville Theological School, was good enough to collate the foregoing passages at the same time that I had that privilege, and he confirms the readings here suggested.

The first sign in rev. II 46 has no tangible resemblance to *gīr* (Langdon), nor is it *šà* (Barton), nor *pi* (Albright). The traces are difficult, but a comparison with *sag* just above shows that they rather readily lend themselves to *ka* 'mouth.' As I try to show elsewhere, this should help to eliminate some possibilities.

I forego a discussion of the elusive character *TAK.KU*. Professor Barton (cf. *AJTh*, XXI, 571 ff.) has thrown the most light on its true nature. Cf. also Langdon (*ET*, XXIX, 22) and Albright (*JAOS*, XXXIX, 80 ff.) (Dr. Albright has assured me in conversation that the true reading of the name has been discovered. The results have not yet been published.)

Langdon's copy is a marvelous piece of work to have been made from a photograph, but the method is, nevertheless, fatal to that fidelity demanded in the reproduction of original documents.

The title, though bordering on the fanciful, has aroused a truly justifiable interest in a work embodying a view of things as instructive as it is naïve, as primitive as it is diverse from the earliest legends of Israel.

LERoy WATERMAN

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

<sup>1</sup> For my own proposal see *JAOS*, XXXIX, 322 ff.